



# NICOLLET AVENUE:

The Revitalization  
of Minneapolis'  
Main Street

May 2000

*Cover Photos:*

*Recent images of Nicollet Avenue overlaid on a 1972 photo of the northwest quadrant of the Nicollet Avenue/Lake Street intersection (current site of Kmart and New Market Grocery Store)*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Nicollet Avenue is many different things to many different people. In downtown Minneapolis, Nicollet Mall is home to the corporate headquarters of many major companies in the upper Midwest. Nicollet Mall is a place to meet to do business during the work day and a place to gather socially after hours. Nicollet Avenue is a transportation corridor and vital bus route that links the downtown with southwest Minneapolis. Nicollet Avenue is a place where people live and it serves as a focal point for the neighborhoods that it traverses. It supports local trips by bus, car, foot, or bike. Businesses along the avenue provide for the daily needs of southwest Minneapolis residents. In short, by offering something for everyone, Nicollet Avenue serves as Minneapolis' main street by connecting business, entertainment, shopping, housing, and services.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Many exciting things are happening along Nicollet Avenue. Eat Street, the stretch of Nicollet from Grant Street to 29<sup>th</sup> Street, which is dotted with ethnic restaurants, shops and grocery stores, is reviving interest in the avenue. New and interesting Latino-serving businesses are emerging at 38<sup>th</sup> Street. There are a number of unique, small businesses at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Street intersection. While there are successes, there are also challenges. The closure of Nicollet at Lake Street with the development of Kmart in the late 1970's sharply reduced the amount of traffic on Nicollet and reduced commercial capacity on the avenue. Deteriorated houses and businesses along Nicollet in the section from Lake to 37<sup>th</sup> Street contribute to a perception of decreased safety and declining neighborhood stability. At 60<sup>th</sup> Street a lack of identity and cohesion and a bleak pedestrian environment create a poor gateway to Minneapolis from the City of Richfield. In general, there is a lack of identity along the avenue.

## Establishment of the Nicollet Avenue Task Force

In order to address the challenges but also take advantage of the opportunities along Nicollet, the Minneapolis City Council established the Nicollet Avenue Task Force in the summer of 1998. The Task Force was charged with developing recommendations regarding redevelopment opportunities, areas



*Bus routes along Nicollet Avenue connect Minneapolis to the metropolitan area*



*People relax along Nicollet Mall on a sunny afternoon*



*"Eat Street" supports a variety of ethnic restaurants, shops, and grocery stores*

for improved streetscapes, and, to a lesser extent, transportation and roadway improvements. The study area for the project encompasses both sides of Nicollet Avenue from Grant Street on the north end to the city limits at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street on the south end.

### **The Work of the Task Force**

Over the course of the last year, the Nicollet Avenue Task Force walked and studied the avenue and has developed this report which proposes a series of recommendations. Despite the diversity along the avenue, there are some themes common to the avenue as a whole. For this reason, the report is broken into two sections: corridor-wide recommendations and section-specific recommendations. Both the corridor-wide recommendations and the section-specific recommendations are based on the same four strategies. The corridor-wide recommendations serve as the basis for the section-specific recommendations. The four strategies are:

- Strategy #1: Invest in well-defined commercial nodes and corridors
- Strategy #2: Redevelop under-utilized commercial areas
- Strategy #3: Encourage quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments
- Strategy #4: Manage traffic flow and reduce traffic speed

### **Basic Recommendations**

Strategies #1 and #2 (investment and redevelopment) are very much interrelated. These strategies are about consolidating and enhancing compatible activities in appropriate locations to create both commercial vitality and residential quality. Investment or redevelopment of several critical areas mentioned below will greatly influence the future of Nicollet Avenue. Areas with the potential to serve as catalysts for creating an identity for the avenue include Eat Street, 38<sup>th</sup> Street, and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. Investment in current land use patterns and activities should take place at these locations. Areas that need to change in order to support efforts to enhance the avenue include the Kmart site at Nicollet and Lake, the stretch of the avenue between Lake and 37<sup>th</sup> Street, and the 60<sup>th</sup> Street intersection. One major redevelopment recommendation identifies the critical need to simplify the housing development and approval process in order to provide an adequate housing supply.



*The current orientation of Kmart is a barrier to the revitalization of Nicollet Avenue*



Strategy #3 (urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments) deals with the importance of creating safe and vibrant places on the avenue by incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into building, site, and streetscape design. Several major recommendations coming out of this strategy include targeting investments to well-defined commercial nodes and accompanying requirements for improved design with assistance such as a streamlined development review process or financial incentives. Another idea that has been discussed is the development of design guidelines that would help preserve building elements that have architectural or historical integrity but may not warrant historic preservation.

Strategy #4 (managing traffic flow and reducing traffic speed) is about preserving the civility and vitality of this grand urban corridor. Toward this end, the Task Force recommends narrowing the street where feasible and improving traffic efficiency. Narrowing the street will serve to slow traffic and create more green space, but still allow a high volume of traffic to utilize Nicollet Avenue. The Task Force does not support the evolution of Nicollet Avenue as a three to four-lane thoroughfare. Instead, they promote carefully selected improvements to I35W so that through traffic does not use the city street system.

### **Future Directions**

It is often said that planning is more a process than a product. This document is testimony to this statement. It provides a vision for the future direction of Nicollet Avenue that is intended to be flexible, not a precise development blueprint. Confronting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities will be complicated and will require further work and dedication on the part of the City, neighborhoods, and businesses along Nicollet Avenue. With the continued commitment of these parties, this plan can represent the commencement of that activity.

# INTRODUCTION

The Nicollet Avenue Task Force was established by Minneapolis City Council resolution 98R-161 during the summer of 1998. This resolution followed on the heels of revitalization efforts along Nicollet north of Lake, in the area that has been successfully dubbed “Eat Street”. Streetscape and roadway improvements have fostered a renaissance along this section of Nicollet and have provided a glimpse of the tremendous potential for Nicollet Avenue as a whole.

The Council resolution recognizes that Nicollet Avenue is at a turning point. With clear City policy and public and private support, the avenue can recognize its potential as a grand urban corridor, connecting and integrating neighborhoods and business districts in south Minneapolis. Without consistent policy or support, the threat of decline of this once-vibrant avenue will persist.

## Nicollet Avenue

Nicollet Avenue has always been one of the City’s major transportation corridors along with Lake, Lyndale, Hennepin, Central, and Broadway. It links southwest Minneapolis with downtown, but it also serves as a focal point for the neighborhoods that it traverses. As a result, Nicollet Avenue has both a large and continuous identity, but also a focused and distinct identity that is reflective of the neighborhoods surrounding it.

A number of challenges face Nicollet Avenue today. First and foremost is the closure of Nicollet at Lake Street. Without a through route, people and dollars which would be spent along Nicollet are instead diverted to other parts of the City. Other challenges include conflicting adjacent land uses, underutilized and often deteriorated commercial and residential structures, an irregular and often threatening pedestrian environment, high speed traffic (particularly south of Lake Street) and a lack of identity (both for the corridor as a whole and for distinct locations along the corridor).

## Charge to the Nicollet Avenue Task Force

The Nicollet Avenue Task Force was established to address these challenges by developing recommendations regarding redevelopment opportunities, areas for improved streetscapes, and, to a lesser extent, transportation and roadway improvements. The Task Force is comprised of people who live along the avenue, work or own a business along the avenue, neighborhood representatives, and experts such as architects and landscape architects. Representatives from various city departments, such as Planning, Public Works, and the



*Nicollet Avenue links southwest Minneapolis with the downtown, both functionally and visually*

Minneapolis Community Development Agency, also participate in Task Force meetings and discussions.

The basic concepts in this report have been presented to each neighborhood along the corridor. In addition, a focus group meeting of business owners along Nicollet Avenue was held to hear and respond to concerns of the business community regarding investment and redevelopment opportunities along Nicollet Avenue. Throughout the process of developing this report, the Task Force has endeavored to build upon the avenue's assets and draw upon the range of expertise and knowledge of members and other interested individuals to develop recommendations that recognize both the diversity and continuity of the avenue.

## **A Vision for the Avenue**

The study area for this report encompasses both sides of Nicollet Avenue from Grant Street on the north end to the city limits at 62<sup>nd</sup> Street on the south end (*see map on page 14*). This is a length of about 50 blocks, or six miles. Six neighborhoods lie along Nicollet Avenue in the study area. Each neighborhood has its own unique character and is facing its own unique challenges depending, in part, on differing conditions related to population, income, land use, employment opportunities, housing stock, traffic patterns, and geographical features to name just a few variables.

Despite the tremendous diversity along the avenue, some generalizations can be made. In terms of land use, Nicollet Avenue can be differentiated at a very basic level north and south of Lake Street. North of Lake Street, Nicollet Avenue is very commercial. South of Lake Street, the land use pattern is more a mix of commercial and residential uses. This division is reflected in City policy for the area. The City's comprehensive plan (*The Minneapolis Plan*) designates Nicollet north of Lake as a commercial corridor.

**Commercial corridors** are streets that:

- Are available for development including more intensive commercial and high traffic activities;
- support all types of commercial uses, with some light industry and high-density residential uses as well;
- balance pedestrian and automobile orientation in their design and development; and
- carry large traffic volumes and must balance significant vehicular through-traffic capacity with automobile and pedestrian access to commercial property

*(The Minneapolis Plan, page 1.4.31)*

The Minneapolis Plan designates Nicollet south of Lake as a community corridor.

**Community corridors** are streets that:

- Support medium-density residential uses and increased housing diversity;
- Support limited commercial uses which are measured against their impacts on residential character;
- Are oriented toward the pedestrian experience in terms of design and development
- Carry fairly high volumes of traffic, but must balance vehicular travel against residential quality of life.

*(The Minneapolis Plan, page 1.4.30)*

The Task Force has developed a vision for the avenue which recognizes its diversity and unique characteristics:

*“In the year 2025, Nicollet Avenue will be a continuous corridor with a recognizable identity along which residents, workers, and visitors will celebrate its many distinctly different and unique parts.*

*Nicollet Avenue will represent the best of urban living for a diverse group of people by providing housing options, employment, a mix of goods and services, multiple and efficient transportation options, and opportunities for entertainment and recreation.*

*Primarily south of Lake Street, Nicollet Avenue will provide a safe, stable, and attractive residential environment where the daily needs of residents and workers in surrounding neighborhoods are served through clearly defined commercial areas. Primarily north of Lake Street, Nicollet Avenue will serve a more regional population by capitalizing on a vibrant commercial area.*

*Nicollet Avenue will embrace its multiple roles, becoming a destination and a conduit, an economic focal point, and a neighborhood in which to live, work, and play.”*

The four main strategies listed below are based upon this vision. These strategies strive to promote commercial vitality and preserve residential quality, thereby supporting both the commercial corridor and community corridor characteristics of Nicollet Avenue.



*Commercial corridors are streets with intense commercial activity*



*Community corridors are streets with a mix of commercial and residential uses*

## Strategies

- Strategy #1: Invest in well-defined commercial nodes and corridors to encourage increased compatibility of adjacent uses
- Strategy #2: Redevelop under-utilized commercial areas to encourage increased compatibility of adjacent uses
- Strategy #3: Encourage quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments
- Strategy #4: Manage traffic flow and reduce traffic speed

The following corridor-wide recommendations apply to a series of systems (such as transportation, markets, and urban design), which define the underlying essence of Nicollet Avenue. In this way, the corridor-wide recommendations create the framework which serves as the basis for the section-specific recommendations in later chapters.

# Nicollet Avenue Section Key



Grant St. - 29th St.

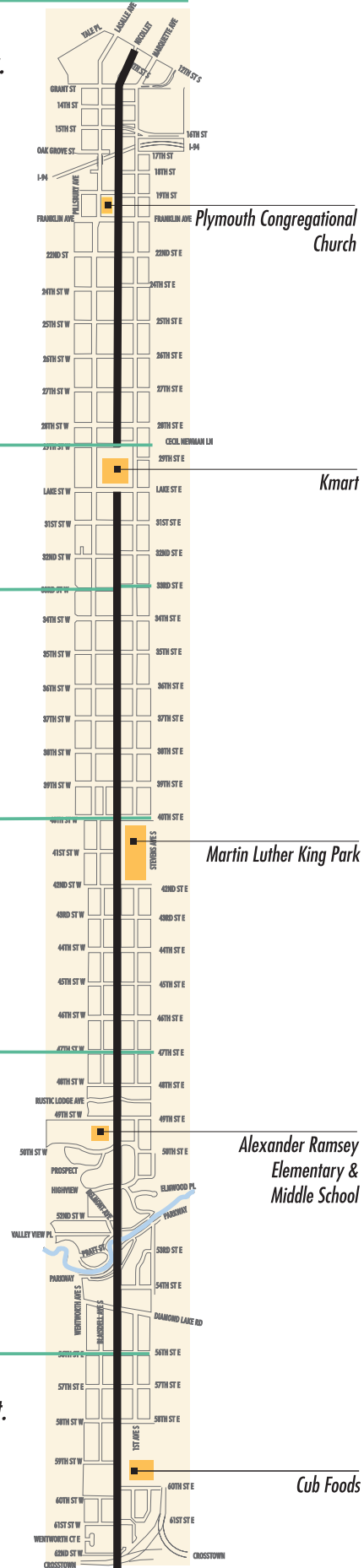
29th St. - 33rd St.

33rd St. - 40th St.

40th St. - 47th St.

47th St. - 56th St.

56th St. - 62nd St.





# CORRIDOR-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

**Strategy #1: Invest in well-defined commercial nodes and corridors to encourage compatibility of adjacent uses**

## Background

### An Excess of Commercial Land

In the late 1880's the streetcar and trolley system was flourishing in Minneapolis. Nicollet Avenue was one of several major streetcar lines. Other major lines included Hennepin, Lake, Broadway, and Central. Small clusters of stores offering a variety of goods and services prospered at streetcar stops which existed every few blocks. These commercial nodes were highly reliant upon the pedestrian traffic generated by the streetcar stops (*The Minneapolis Plan*, page 1.4.30).

With the advent of the automobile, people were no longer confined to shopping in areas that were within easy walking distance from their home, work, or a streetcar stop. Shopping malls and supermarkets built to accommodate cars and their drivers easily attracted this more mobile population. Commercial activity became concentrated at fewer, but larger, nodes.

Many vestiges of the small streetcar-oriented commercial nodes remain, but they struggle to survive because there is not the population base to sustain both the small nodes and the larger shopping areas. As a result, there is an excess of commercial land in the city. Minneapolis has approximately twice as many commercial nodes as its population can support (City Business, July 1996). This holds true along Nicollet Avenue as well.

### The Need for Consolidation and Investment

Strategy #1 (invest in well-defined commercial nodes and corridors) recognizes that not all of the currently existing commercial nodes can thrive. Instead, this strategy suggests that commercial activity should be concentrated at several well-defined commercial nodes. These areas of concentrated commercial activity should not be confused with typical shopping malls. As will be explored further under Strategy #3 (encourage quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments), in creating these destinations it is vitally important to capitalize upon the unique characteristics of the location and to enhance the pedestrian experience.

## The Nicollet/Lake Challenge

A major barrier to the commercial vitality of Nicollet Avenue is the discontinuity of the avenue at Lake Street with the Kmart store.

When Kmart was built on Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street in the late 1970s, it was part of an economic development strategy for the intersection and the surrounding area. The Kmart store has been successful and provides a needed discount retail service to the surrounding population. Ironically, however, this economic development strategy turned its back on Nicollet Avenue, effectively placing a tourniquet on the flow of consumer traffic to the Nicollet-Lake intersection and along Nicollet generally.

The design of the Kmart/New Market site hugely contributes to the bleak environment at the Nicollet/Lake intersection. Despite the high level of pedestrian traffic and transit service that exists here, the pedestrian environment is largely ignored. The scale and form of the building and the expansive parking lot poorly define the street edge, and, in essence, "erode" the north and southeast corners of the intersection.

While committed business owners have helped bring about a renaissance on the avenue north of Lake Street, the discontinuity of Nicollet at Lake is still a major obstacle to commercial vitality. Reorienting Kmart and reopening Nicollet Avenue would be a tremendous boon to the area. It would not only revitalize Nicollet Avenue, but would also contribute to the success of redevelopment efforts along Lake Street and along the 29<sup>th</sup> Street Greenway. **For these reasons, Task Force members believe that reopening Nicollet at Lake is the single most important element in revitalizing Nicollet Avenue.**

Strategy #1 further states that investment should be targeted to well-defined commercial nodes. “Investment” refers primarily to the dedication of public dollars (including neighborhood funds) to assist in creating a place with an identity and concentrating commercial uses. Investment may include funds for business attraction, business development and improvement, and public realm improvements such as roadway reconstruction and streetscape improvements.



*The 26<sup>th</sup> Street intersection...*



*and the 38<sup>th</sup> Street intersection are  
two of several locations identified as  
“investment areas”*

With public investment assisting in the creation of an identity and a concentration of commercial uses, the expectation is that private investment will follow. People are more likely to stop and shop in an area that 1) is easily identifiable; and 2) provides a variety of goods and services which facilitates “one-stop shopping”. In this way, concentrating commercial activity can draw in customers from outside the local area, thereby increasing the vitality of the commercial node. As businesses become more successful, they can maintain their property and provide customer amenities more cost-effectively, thereby attracting more customers and initiating a virtuous cycle.

The Task Force has identified a number of commercial nodes as investment areas. These are listed below and are described in greater detail and identified on maps in the Specific Recommendations section of this report. These areas were selected because they have an existing level of commercial activity and an established or “latent” identity that can support and be enhanced by increased density, activity, and public realm improvements.

## 1 Recommendations

### **Investment Areas**

- 1.1 Support and invest in commercial development in the following areas (the locations in parentheses are provided for orientation purposes only):
  - 1.1.1 Grant Street to Lake Street - with particular focus on Franklin Avenue (Acadia Café), 26<sup>th</sup> Street (Black Forest Inn), and Lake Street (Kmart, see sidebar)
  - 1.1.2 35<sup>th</sup> to 36<sup>th</sup> Streets (Super America, Saffron Café)
  - 1.1.3 38<sup>th</sup> Street (Ace Hardware, Marissa's Bakery)
  - 1.1.4 42<sup>nd</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup> Street (Curran's Restaurant, Anodyne Café, Road Runner Records)
  - 1.1.5 46<sup>th</sup> Street (Bruegger's Bagels, Snyder's Drug Store)
  - 1.1.6 48<sup>th</sup> Street (Tom Thumb)
  - 1.1.7 Diamond Lake Road (Steep-N-Brew, Holiday Station)
  - 1.1.8 60<sup>th</sup> Street (Cub Foods, Richfield Lutheran Church)

## Strategy #2: Redevelop underutilized commercial areas to encourage compatibility of adjacent uses

### Background

While Strategy #1 is concerned with supporting commercial land use patterns at well-defined commercial nodes, Strategy #2 deals with the issue of changing land use patterns in underutilized commercial areas. In these areas, the primary goal is to increase compatibility with adjacent land uses and there are basically two options to do so:

- the business in question could relocate to a well-defined commercial node and the site could be redeveloped as another use; or
- the business in question could undertake building design, site design, and management improvements that enhance the pedestrian environment and make them a better neighbor.

### The Challenge of Auto-Oriented Facilities

Many of the sites that have been identified by the Task Force as redevelopment areas are auto-oriented facilities. These are facilities such as gas stations, automobile repair garages, and car washes which generate a lot of automobile traffic. These uses can be particularly problematic along an avenue that is attempting to bill itself as a grand urban corridor because they detract from the pedestrian experience. However, relocation of these businesses and redevelopment of the sites for the purpose of increasing compatibility of adjacent uses may not necessarily be the best option. In the new neighborhood (presumably an active commercial node), relocation could result in more conflicts with pedestrians. Relocation may also mean the loss of a valued service in the former neighborhood.

### Increasing Compatibility through Improved Design

For these reasons, improved site design, building design, and management may be the best means of achieving increased compatibility of auto-oriented facilities. This solution comes with a caveat, however. Simply requiring higher design standards may cause businesses to move elsewhere (if standards *aren't* applied city-wide), or may cause them to go out of business entirely (if standards *are* applied city-wide), resulting in the loss of a neighborhood service. Therefore, it is important that requirements for improved site and building design be accompanied with assistance (in the form of grants, loans, expedited city processes or pre-approved site and building designs) to enable the business to remain in the area, but to



*Auto-oriented uses such as this one at 36<sup>th</sup> Street...*



*and these at the 58<sup>th</sup> Street intersection can be problematic redevelopment challenges*



operate as a better neighbor. If the business is so marginal that it still can not meet the higher standards, then another use for the property should be pursued.

Redevelopment areas are listed below and are described in greater detail and identified on maps in the Specific Recommendations section of this report. In several instances, the Task Force has identified both a short term strategy (often improved site and building design), as well as a long-term strategy (often residential redevelopment). Well designed off-street parking should accompany residential developments of significant size.

## 2 Recommendations

### Redevelopment Areas

#### 2.1 Redevelop or improve the following areas:

- 2.1.1 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Streets: Redevelop existing under-utilized commercial uses and parking lot as mixed commercial and residential development
- 2.1.2 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Streets: Redevelop existing vacant and under-utilized buildings (former outboard motors store) as a mixed commercial/high-density residential use
- 2.1.3 Between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup>: Redevelop existing vacant lots as multi-family residential which matches the character of adjacent buildings
- 2.1.4 34<sup>th</sup> Street: Redevelop the node at 34<sup>th</sup> Street as commercial/residential mixed-use such as live-work housing types
- 2.1.5 37<sup>th</sup> Street: Encourage improved site and building design of existing underutilized commercial uses in the short-term. If improved site and building design can't be achieved, encourage redevelopment as low- to mid-density residential (which matches the character of surrounding residences).
- 2.1.6 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Streets: Encourage improved site and building design of existing auto-oriented uses in the short term. In the long-term, encourage redevelopment as residential which matches the character of adjacent residences and capitalizes on the neighboring park and quality residential environment.
- 2.1.7 44<sup>th</sup> Street: Encourage redevelopment of underutilized commercial site (currently a garage/workshop) on the west side of the 4400 block as low intensity commercial or residential.



*Intersections at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street...*



*34<sup>th</sup> Street...*



*and 37<sup>th</sup> Street are identified as  
"redevelopment areas"*

- 2.1.8 47<sup>th</sup> Street: Encourage site and design improvements of neighborhood-serving businesses (Richfield Auto, Last Tangle Hair Salon) at the 47<sup>th</sup> Street node. If improved site and building design cannot be achieved, redevelopment as residential should be considered.
- 2.1.9 58<sup>th</sup> Street: Encourage improved site and building design of auto-oriented uses (Goodyear, Engfer Automotive, 58<sup>th</sup> Street Service Station) at the 58<sup>th</sup> Street node. If improved site and building design cannot be achieved, the area should be redeveloped as commercial and residential mixed use, similar to that which currently exists on the northwest corner (Diamond Lake Animal Hospital)
- 2.2 Hold a workshop for small business owners and neighborhood residents to increase understanding of the opportunities to recruit quality businesses and improve site and design when properties change hands
- 2.3 Accompany requirements for improved site and building design with assistance (in the form of grants, loans, expedited city processes or pre-approved site and building designs) to enable businesses to remain in the area, but to operate as better neighbors



*LeJeune Steel operates in a primarily residential and commercial area*

## Background

### Existing Industrial Uses

There are only two industrial sites along the Nicollet Avenue corridor: the GFI meat processing plant and LeJeune Steel. While problems associated with industrial uses are not as prevalent as other problems, they have none-the-less been a topic of significant discussion.

Industrial uses may have many of the same negative impacts as auto-oriented uses. Not surprisingly, the recommendation for dealing with them is the same. Moving the industry elsewhere will simply result in negative impacts elsewhere. Relocating or redeveloping the industrial site will mean the loss of jobs. Therefore, requiring compliance with higher site and design standards (and providing assistance to encourage businesses to comply) is the most appropriate near-term solution. Over time, the avenue will begin to evolve into a grand urban corridor. At that point, industrial uses may no longer be appropriate along the corridor. Under such a scenario, the fact that rents and land prices will likely increase to the point that it is no longer cost effective to operate an industry along the corridor may help this argument.



## Recommendations

### Industrial Uses

- 2.4 For industrial uses which are compatible with adjacent commercial and residential uses, encourage improved site and building design. If improved site and building design cannot be achieved, pursue relocation of the industrial use, rezoning of the site, and redevelopment compatible with surrounding uses and plans for the area.
- 2.5 For industrial uses which are incompatible with adjacent commercial and residential uses, pursue relocation of industrial use, rezoning of the site, and redevelopment compatible with surrounding uses and plans for the area.

## Background

### Housing Development:

Where redevelopment has been proposed, the Task Force recommendation is often for residential redevelopment. There are two primary reasons for this. First, there is currently and will continue to be a need for housing in the city. Minneapolis' population is growing. In its latest series of demographic projections, the Metropolitan Council estimates that there will be an additional 9000 households in Minneapolis in the year 2020. City of Minneapolis projections, which are based on more current information, project an even greater increase of 10,500 by 2020. A wide range of people of varying income levels is contributing to the increasing population. For this reason it is important to provide a range of housing types and affordabilities. This can be accomplished through the construction of new housing and, just as importantly, it can also be accomplished through the preservation of existing housing.

The second rationale for residential development is that it helps to create 24-hour activity along the avenue. An area of mixed office, commercial and residential use generates activity during the day when people are working and shopping, and it creates activity during the evening when people are at home. As will be described in greater detail in the next chapter, 24-hour activity can help reduce crime, improve people's perceptions of safety, and contribute to the overall commercial vitality of the avenue.

There are barriers to the construction of new housing and preservation of old housing in Minneapolis. So-called "brown field" redevelopment in the city may require demolition, site clearing, and hazardous materials removal, all of which can be expensive given the small lot sizes that are typically available for development. When compared with "green field" develop-



*In some areas along Nicollet, mixed use development which combines residential with retail or office space may be appropriate*

ment in the suburbs (where land is ready without site preparation), infill development may become less attractive to a developer. A small, inner city developer may have a difficult time amassing the capital for site preparation, may get lost in the City's bureaucratic housing development and approval process, and, additionally, may be overwhelmed by neighborhood requests for meetings and alterations to the original design.

## Recommendations

### **Housing Development**

- 2.6 Provide a variety of housing types and prices including live-work opportunities.
- 2.7 Encourage home-based businesses that are compatible with residential uses
- 2.8 Simplify the infill housing development and approval process
  - 2.8.1 Develop additional MCDA and other funding sources which could be used to "level the playing field" between city and suburban development by paying for site preparation such as relocation of existing businesses, demolition, hazardous materials removal, and clearing
  - 2.8.2 Continue to pursue a streamlined application and permitting process in which a "project manager" is assigned to lead a developer through City requirements
  - 2.8.3 Pursue opportunities to streamline the neighborhood review process by developing a consistent neighborhood review process and consistent design standards
  - 2.8.4 Develop a program to develop design guidelines and provide design assistance to prospective developers
- 2.9 Preserve the existing housing stock
  - 2.9.1 Utilize MCDA, NRP and other sources of funding to preserve housing
  - 2.9.2 Develop an educational program to make people aware of financial assistance programs available to them
  - 2.9.3 Promote the City's "Truth in Housing" program which requires repair or replacement of certain life-safety items prior to the sale of homes, duplexes, townhouses, and accessory buildings

## Strategy #3: Encourage quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments

### Background

The recommendations under Strategy #3 build upon the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles (described in sidebar) as the basis for creating pedestrian environments. Pedestrian environments built around CPTED principles can be additionally embellished by incorporating historical characteristics, architectural features, green elements, property maintenance, and public art. These “embellishments” turn functional locations into places of beauty and integrity.

### Urban Design and Pedestrian Environments

The Nicollet Avenue Task Force envisions Nicollet as a grand urban corridor along which urban design and streetscape improvements attract pedestrians and contribute to commercial vitality. There are several regulatory mechanisms in place to preserve and promote pedestrian environments: Pedestrian Overlay Districts, Special Service Districts and the Site Plan Review process.

### *Pedestrian Overlay District*

The Pedestrian Overlay District is a zoning district established to “preserve and encourage the pedestrian character of commercial areas and to promote street life and activity by regulating building orientation and design and accessory parking facilities, and by prohibiting certain high impact and auto-oriented uses” (City of Minneapolis September 1998 Draft Zoning Code, Chapter 551, Article II). Among other things, this district prohibits the establishment of drive-through facilities and auto services uses. In addition, it prohibits some types of on-premise signs (such as pole signs, back-lighted awning and canopy signs, and back-lighted insertable panel projecting signs) and encourages shared parking. Criteria to be considered in establishing a pedestrian overlay district include:

- the level of pedestrian interest and activity;
- the variety of retail sales and services;
- the extent to which properties have limited or no front setback;  
and
- the availability of public transit service.

### Pedestrian Environments and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

The term “pedestrian-friendly” appears throughout this report. What does it mean and what can be accomplished by it? A pedestrian-friendly environment is an environment of safety and comfort that attracts pedestrians, raises the activity level of an area, and further enhances safety (which attracts more pedestrians, even further enhancing safety). A virtuous cycle is established. Elements that contribute to pedestrian environments are firmly rooted in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles (CPTED, pronounced ‘sep ted’).

CPTED principles are based on the theory that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life. CPTED is based on three overlapping strategies: 1) natural surveillance; 2) natural access control; and 3) territorial reinforcement. These strategies can be applied to an individual building as well as to an entire neighborhood (Planning Commissioners Journal, Fall 1994).

#### Natural Surveillance

The primary goal of natural surveillance is to facilitate observation. This includes the ability to observe others, as well as the ability to be observed *by* others in the course of normal everyday activities. Safety is enhanced when lines of sight are open and people can be easily observed. If criminals can be seen, they will be less likely to commit a crime.

- An appropriate level of uniform lighting enhances natural surveillance and can also improve the aesthetics of an area. To encourage pedestrians to use an area, lighting should not be too bright and lamp posts should be at pedestrian-level heights in order to illuminate the sidewalks and other areas where pedestrians gather. Providing lighting from several sources is most effective.



- Windows facilitate observation and create “eyes on the sidewalk” or “eyes on the street” which promote safety. Windows can also contribute to commercial vitality by allowing potential customers to see shopkeepers’ products which might then entice them to enter the store.
- Place safe activities in unsafe areas to increase the number of people and “eyes” in areas vulnerable to crime. Similarly, creating 24-hour activity by locating residential land uses adjacent or within other land uses (such as commercial or office) can improve round-the-clock observation. Locate gathering spots (benches, phones, bus stops) in areas where they can be observed.



### **Natural Access Control**

Natural access control is about guiding and controlling movement of people on site and within buildings.

- Locate buildings with limited setbacks, landscaping, sidewalks, lighting, and fencing to clearly guide people on and through the site and to control and restrict access to appropriate locations on the site. Public access should be discouraged from unmonitored, isolated or dark areas.

### ***Special Service Districts***

Special Service Districts (City Charter, Chapter 4, Section 5) are districts in which additional taxes are levied to adjacent property owners to pay for the provision of public services. These public services most often include maintenance of streetscape elements such as lighting, benches, trees and landscaping, and sidewalks. If requested, special service districts can also provide for snow removal, installation of twinkle lights in trees, graffiti and litter removal, and many other services. A special service district currently exists along “Eat Street” between Grant and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### ***Site Plan Review***

Rather than applying to a geographic area, the Site Plan Review process (City of Minneapolis September 1998 Draft Zoning Code, Chapter 530, Article I) applies to individual uses such as auto services uses, drive-through facilities, food and beverage uses, and buildings of 20,000 or more square feet. These and other specified uses are required to have their site and building plans reviewed by the City Planning Commission before development or expansion approval can be granted. Elements of the site plan that are reviewed include building setback, parking lot placement (to the side or rear of the building), height, scale, window coverage, provision of architectural detail, and compatibility of exterior materials among others. The Planning Commission has the ability to require improvements such as enhanced landscaping, improved building orientation or design, parking lot landscaping and screening, and compliance with CPTED principles.

While the majority of areas along the corridor could benefit from improvements which would enhance the pedestrian environment, the areas that would provide the “biggest bang for the investment buck” are the commercial nodes identified in Strategy #1. These areas of identity and commercial concentration have the greatest potential to attract people and dollars from outside of the local area. There is a direct correlation between profits and property maintenance improvements. Therefore, as profits at these nodes increase, business owners become better able to maintain their properties. For this reason, it is recommended that investments be targeted to well-defined commercial nodes.

## **3 Recommendations**

### **Urban Design and Pedestrian Environments**

- 3.1 Encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment along the entire stretch of Nicollet Avenue, but focus streetscape,



building design and maintenance, and site design and maintenance investments (public and private) at commercial nodes. New streetscape plans along Nicollet should consider existing streetscape elements but design should be allowed to vary according to different needs and character along the avenue.

- 3.2 Establish pedestrian overlay districts at nodes with high potential for pedestrian activity. The Task Force recommends that pedestrian overlay districts be established at appropriate locations between 14<sup>th</sup> Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, at 38<sup>th</sup> Street and between 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street (mid-block).
- 3.3 Modify parking regulations to allow for greater shared parking and minimize parking requirements, particularly in the pedestrian overlay district
- 3.4 Accompany requirements for improved site and building design with assistance (in the form of grants, loans, expedited city processes or pre-approved site and building designs) to enable businesses to remain in the area, but to operate as better neighbors
- 3.5 Provide an educational program for businesses and residents on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

### **Maintenance and Property Improvement**

- 3.6 Establish special service districts in conjunction with streetscape improvements in order to provide for maintenance of streetscape elements. Provision of public amenities such as drinking fountains, public lavatories, and phones should be considered on a case by case basis and only in conjunction with the establishment of a special service district to ensure regular management and maintenance.
- 3.7 Streamline City procedures for special service district maintenance in order to improve efficiency and lower costs of special service districts.
- 3.8 Target public realm improvements to stimulate private investment and improve the environment for investment generally
- 3.9 Increase the pool of capital available to businesses in order to encourage the commercial reuse of buildings. Explore options through the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), neighborhood revolving loan funds, and charitable foundations

- As a general rule, fencing should be no higher than 3 ½ feet so that lines of sight are maintained. Picket fences and short brick or stone walls look pleasant and don't limit visibility, although solid surfaces can invite graffiti. Similarly, shrubs should be no taller than three feet and tree limbs should be pruned to six feet above the ground to facilitate observation.



- Access problems in parking lots pose particular problems. Parking lots are areas of semi-private space and areas of combined pedestrian and vehicular activity. Access to parking lots should be limited and areas of pedestrian and vehicular travel should be clearly defined.

### **Territorial Reinforcement**

Territorial reinforcement is about clearly delineating ownership and appropriate behavior for all spaces. Criminals don't look out of place in an area of dilapidated buildings, unkempt lawns, overgrown shrubbery, trash and graffiti. In these areas, criminals are less easily spotted committing crimes. The more a property line is defined and property ownership is identified, the more a criminal will stick out. Indications of ownership include:

- improvements to the front, sides, and back of buildings such as the addition of windows and awnings
- landscaping, planters, or flower boxes
- maintenance of building and surroundings by caring for and trimming landscaped areas, keeping up with repairs and painting, and removing graffiti and trash.

### Other Pedestrian Enhancements

The CPTED principles mentioned above lay the foundation for a safe pedestrian environment. Pedestrian environments can be further enhanced by consideration of two additional elements: scale and amenities. People generally feel more comfortable in human-scaled surroundings. Two- to four-story buildings, low-level lighting, and awnings all help to make pedestrians feel more a part of their environment. Appropriately-placed amenities such as benches, newspaper dispensers, trash cans, and bike racks can make people feel more comfortable and make them want to linger in an area. Artistic elements on sidewalks, benches, and bridges enhance this mood by implying that there is time to move at a slower pace and time for reflection.

Sources:

"Safe Environments", Southwest Journal, v10, n17, page B6;

Crowe, Timothy, "The Secure Store: A Clean, Well-Lighted Place";

City of Saint Paul, *Design for Public Safety*, December 1993

- 3.10 Increase awareness of MCDA grants and loans (such as Neighborhood Economic Development Fund, Two Percent Loans, and Capital Acquisition Loans) as well as NRP matching funds available to businesses for property improvements and investments
- 3.11 Increase awareness of MCDA and NRP home improvement funds available to homeowners.
- 3.12 Improve enforcement of City requirements for property maintenance including litter pickup, painting, and graffiti removal by notifying the City Inspections Department of maintenance issues
- 3.13 Conduct an educational presentation about Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. Incorporate information about property maintenance, particularly litter pickup.
- 3.14 Continue support of the City's Committee on Urban Environment awards to encourage pride in the city environment

### "Greening" the Avenue

- 3.15 Widen the green boulevards along Nicollet Avenue
- 3.16 Restore the tree canopy by planting additional trees and replacing diseased or ailing trees
- 3.17 Use hardy, salt-resistant tree and grass species to better their chances for survival and improve their appearance
- 3.18 Consider alternative ways to "green" the avenue including installation of flower boxes and hanging planters
- 3.19 Continue support for the City's Blooming Boulevards award program to encourage beautification of the City.
- 3.20 Consider developing a commercial Blooming Boulevards program to encourage business owners to beautify their properties

### Public Art

- 3.21 Pursue opportunities for public art on "human scale" elements such as sidewalks, bus stops, seating areas, tree grates, trash bins, retaining walls, fences, bridges, and gateways
- 3.22 Encourage public funding of public art projects



## Background

### Design Guidelines and Historic Preservation

The Site Plan Review process discussed earlier can help preserve a few of the architectural or historical features of *some* buildings and their sites (basically only those buildings containing uses that are required to go through Site Plan Review, such as auto-oriented uses and transportation-related uses). Design elements on buildings that are *not* targeted under Site Plan Review will most likely not receive protection or preservation, unless they are designated historic structures. Many buildings have interesting architectural features (such as facades, windows, or setbacks) but may not be worthy of historic designation. For this reason, preservation of those features may be more difficult.

The development and application of design guidelines could address the issues raised above. Guidelines could be distributed by the City prior to demolition, redevelopment or remodeling. These design guidelines should be based upon principles, such as CPTED principles, that promote public benefits such as crime prevention, commercial vitality, and historic preservation. Design guidelines could apply to districts, entire buildings, or elements of buildings such as the facade, entrance, setback. If applied to individual buildings, a large identification process would need to be undertaken to determine which buildings have “preservation-worthy” elements. Guidelines could be either voluntary or mandatory depending largely upon the resources available to apply and enforce them.

### Recommendations

- 3.23 Conduct an educational presentation for businesses and residents on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- 3.24 Encourage business associations to disseminate culturally appropriate (i.e., translated) information on CPTED and funding sources for property improvements to immigrant businesses
- 3.25 Develop design guidelines for uses or design elements not covered under Site Plan Review
- 3.26 Develop design guidelines that identify historical or architectural elements (such as façade, entry, windows, setback, etc.) or significant artistic elements that might warrant preservation



*Buildings that are not necessarily historic structures may still have architectural elements (such as the façade, windows, and setback) that should be preserved*

- 3.27 Work with the Heritage Preservation Commission and neighborhoods to identify districts, buildings, or building elements with historic or architectural integrity and generate a list which could be used by the City to determine when design guidelines should be applied.
- 3.28 If guidelines are voluntary, encourage compliance with them by pursuing adoption by the City Planning Commission, distributing them with applications for redevelopment or remodeling of “identified” properties, and providing grants or loans to business owners who agree to preserve or restore design elements
- 3.29 Work with the Heritage Preservation Commission to develop a looser definition of historic preservation to allow for partial restoration, preservation of historic or architectural elements, and maintenance of buildings with historic or architectural integrity that are not technically on the Historic Register
- 3.30 Identify funding sources to provide monetary incentives to encourage preservation rather than tear-down/re-build projects

## Strategy #4: Manage traffic flow and reduce traffic speed

### Background

There are four main issues regarding traffic along Nicollet Avenue: traffic volume, traffic efficiency, traffic speed and roadway conditions. Both sections of Nicollet north and south of Lake have concerns with these issues. The degree to which the issue is a problem, however, varies with the area.

### Traffic volume

Current traffic volumes on Nicollet Avenue range from 7300 average annual daily traffic (AADT) counts just north of 15<sup>th</sup> Street, to 14,900 AADT just north of 61<sup>st</sup> Street (Vehicular Traffic Flow Map, Minneapolis Public Works, 1998). With the exception of 61<sup>st</sup> Street, all traffic count locations experienced a decrease in traffic after the construction of Kmart on Nicollet at Lake Street. At this time, all traffic count locations have reached or exceeded pre-Kmart traffic levels except for points north of Franklin Avenue and 31<sup>st</sup> Street.

In general, traffic volumes do not pose many problems on the avenue. In fact, neighborhoods and businesses would like to attract more traffic to Nicollet, particularly north of Lake Street where land use patterns are less residential. This desire will be fulfilled easily if Kmart is reoriented and Nicollet is reopened at Lake Street, because traffic volumes along Nicollet will increase substantially. Other means of attracting traffic to Nicollet should be explored, in the event that the Nicollet reopening project is unsuccessful.

While the Task Force supports attracting traffic to Nicollet, they are opposed to the idea of creating a three- or four-lane thoroughfare. They fear that a thoroughfare will detract from the avenue's commercial vitality by removing parking and by increasing already high traffic speeds. As examples, consider shopping patterns along Excelsior Boulevard in Saint Louis Park versus Grand Avenue in Saint Paul or Upton Avenue in the Linden Hills neighborhood of Minneapolis. The two latter examples are more likely to get people out of their cars to shop for a variety of goods and services at a number of locations. Rather than Nicollet, Interstate 35W should be promoted as the primary transportation corridor moving commuters into and out of the city. On Nicollet, the Task Force supports the existing condition (with minor adjustments) of one driving lane in each direction and a parking lane on each side of the avenue as a means of promoting commercial development.



*Moving bus stops to the far side of intersections where feasible could facilitate right hand turns*



*South of Lake Street Nicollet Avenue has not been repaved since 1954*

## Interstate 35W Access

The ongoing work of the Phillips Partnership has the potential to influence traffic on Nicollet between 26th and 38th Streets. With leadership from Honeywell and Abbott Northwestern executives, The Phillips Partnership is a diverse group that was set up to explore opportunities to improve the quality of life for residents and workers in the Phillips Neighborhood. The recent work of the Partnership has focused on improving access to and from I35W near Lake Street. Several alternatives are being considered including southbound entrance and exit options around the 26<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> Street area and northbound entrance and exit options around the Lake/28<sup>th</sup> Street area. If Lake Street is chosen as the logical freeway access point, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will move freeway access from 35<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Streets to 38<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Traffic Efficiency

Where problems along Nicollet Avenue appear to be connected with traffic volume, they are more likely problems of traffic efficiency. Traffic can back up behind people making left turns where no left turn lane exists. In addition, the high level of bus service along the avenue, while providing a tremendous benefit to the area, can complicate right hand turns behind bus stops which are located on the near side (as opposed to far side) of the intersection. Along Nicollet, bus stops exist at almost every intersection and most of them are near-side stops. "No right turn on red" signs might unnecessarily prohibit right turns at some points along the avenue and decrease the efficiency of traffic.

## Traffic Speed

Probably the biggest problem south of Lake Street is traffic speed. While the speed limit is posted at 30 miles per hour, drivers can easily reach 40 or even 45 mph, creating safety problems for other drivers as well as people on sidewalks and crossing streets. This is, in large part, due to the excessive width of the street. Nicollet Avenue is 50 feet wide. This allows for two 10 foot parking lanes and two 15' driving lanes. Twelve feet is the typical driving lane width recommended for this roadway classification. As a result, the street appears to be too wide for two lanes but not quite wide enough for three lanes. This perception of excess room creates an additional safety problem as drivers attempt to pass slower moving traffic. This issue is not only a safety problem. High traffic speeds do not foster commercial activity. It is difficult to ascertain what goods and services are available when driving by at 45 mph.

## Roadway Conditions

The final traffic-related issue along Nicollet relates to the road surface itself. North of Lake Street, Nicollet Avenue was re-paved in 1997 when the streetscape improvements were made and “Eat Street” was created. Nicollet Avenue south of Lake Street hasn’t been re-paved since 1954. Poor road conditions and illegible lane markings exacerbate safety problems.

### 4 Recommendations

#### **Transportation corridors**

- 4.1 Promote 35W as the primary transportation corridor by:
  - 4.1.1 Encouraging carefully selected improvements to 35W such as improved access and car pool lanes
  - 4.1.2 Encouraging light rail transit in addition to other transit alternatives along the 35W corridor
  - 4.1.3 Supporting transit incentives such as selling discounted transit passes to employees, decreasing parking requirements in pedestrian overlay districts, providing bike lanes and racks, and encouraging businesses to advertise transit access options to their establishments
- 4.2 Consider alternative sites for the transit hub proposed to be located at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and 35W. In general, locate the transit hub away from a park or residential area.
- 4.3 Monitor the progress of the Phillips Partnership in discussing alternative access points to 35W in the vicinity of Lake Street
- 4.4 Support 35W access alternatives which have minimal direct impact 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Preferable options include southbound exits at Lake or Nicollet (assuming reoriented Kmart). Any access scenario at 38<sup>th</sup> Street, if necessary, should maintain and improve parking (primarily west of 35W along 38<sup>th</sup>), traffic calming, and landscaping

#### **Roadway improvements**

- 4.5 Where feasible, narrow the roadway to 48 feet in order to slow traffic and widen the boulevards to create a greener, more pedestrian friendly avenue, but recognize that there may not be a uniform solution along the entirety of Nicollet Avenue. Maintain street width within blocks and the perception of consistent width between blocks.



*LaSalle/Blaisdell Avenue, which is one-way to 40<sup>th</sup> Street, carries a high volume of traffic out of the city*



- 4.6 Re-pave the street, redo curb and gutter, and repaint lane lines to reduce lane ambiguity, and improve safety and aesthetics. Re-paving and installation of streetscape elements should be coordinated.
- 4.7 Allow parking on both sides of street in order to promote patronization of businesses along the avenue, increase pedestrian safety, and slow traffic

**Encourage use Nicollet Avenue  
by calming traffic elsewhere**

- 4.8 Explore the feasibility of traffic calming on Blaisdell and First Avenues. Strategies could include converting Blaisdell and First Avenues to two-way streets, striping a bike lane, or striping a parking lane in order to slow traffic
- 4.9 Use well-designed directional signage to entice pedestrians and motorists to patronize businesses along Nicollet Avenue
- 4.10 Create easily identified crosswalks (colored pavers, paint, or patterned pavement)

**Improve traffic efficiency**

- 4.11 Pursue the creation of left turn lanes at Franklin Avenue, 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Lake Street, 31<sup>st</sup> Street, 35<sup>th</sup> Street, 36<sup>th</sup> Street, 46<sup>th</sup> Street, 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Diamond Lake Road, and 60<sup>th</sup> Street
- 4.12 Identify intersections where it would be feasible to move bus stops to the far sides of intersections in order to facilitate right hand turns. Considerations should include whether adjoining property is commercial or residential and, if commercial, the amount of parking that will be lost in front of the business



## SECTION-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

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### GRANT STREET TO 29<sup>TH</sup> STREET

*See map page 38*

#### Background

The August 1999 edition of Mpls St. Paul Magazine described “Eat Street” (Nicollet Avenue between Grant Street and 29<sup>th</sup> Street) as “a worldly ethnic feast for the senses”. Such high praise is an indication of just how far Nicollet Avenue has come. The appearance of ethnic restaurants, grocery stores, and entertainment venues have helped this once-struggling area to emerge as a destination for people who want to experience the tremendous ethnic diversity of the City.

#### Strengths

Many elements have fostered the development of this “ethnic eatery” along Nicollet. First and foremost, the hard work of many small business owners who take pride in their product and place of business contributes greatly to the success of the area. Many of these businesses offer a unique product and experience that can not be replicated elsewhere. In addition, the “Eat Street” marketing campaign has been successful in attracting customers to the avenue and streetscape improvements have “softened” the pedestrian environment and lessened people’s concerns about safety. Finally, the avenue has a number of inherent pedestrian-friendly characteristics such as the early 1900’s one to two story brick or stucco structures with limited setbacks and large front windows. These structures served as a strong backdrop for the streetscape improvements that were made.

#### Challenges

Despite these strengths, this section of the avenue still struggles to promote its pedestrian environment and attract customers. Customers are intimidated by persisting vagrancy. Underutilized buildings and an overabundance of surface parking lots create a “gap-toothed” appearance along the avenue. While Loring Park, Stevens Square Park and Fair Oaks Park are only several blocks off of Nicollet, good, “green” linkages to these three parks do not exist and there are no public gathering spaces along the avenue itself. In general, the “green” environment, including landscaping, along this stretch of the avenue needs improvement. All of these factors detract from the avenue’s potential as a destination and public draw.



*The Music Box Theater is one of several entertainment venues along the avenue*



*Streetscape improvements have softened the pedestrian environment along Nicollet north of Lake Street*

Nicollet has begun to market itself as a commercial area, but it must be constantly vigilant in doing so. Low rents along Nicollet, while providing opportunities for start-up businesses, have led to a concentration of schools and social service uses along Nicollet and in the surrounding area. While no one use is necessarily a problem, in concentration they have detracted from the overall commercial vitality of the avenue.

### **Attracting People Back to Nicollet**

A critical means of increasing the commercial vibrancy of this section of the avenue is to attract people back to the area. Over the years, traffic levels along Nicollet have declined for a number of reasons. First, the construction of Interstate 35W removed commuter traffic. Then, the one-way paired streets of Blaisdell Avenue and First Avenue further reduced commuter traffic on Nicollet. Eventually the placement of Kmart on Nicollet at Lake Street created a barrier between south Nicollet and downtown.

Routing traffic back to Nicollet (as was done when access to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue was limited) can restore some of the original traffic volumes and create a greater customer base. Of course the greatest way to achieve increased traffic levels on Nicollet would be to reopen Nicollet at Lake. Barring this challenging solution, other means of encouraging traffic to use Nicollet should be pursued. Traffic efficiency and safety improvements should be made in conjunction with increased traffic volumes to ensure that traffic flows smoothly and that congestion is minimized. Any changes to I35W access (see Strategy #4) should take into account impacts on 26th and 38th Streets. Public transportation, which is currently strong along the avenue, should continue to be supported. Connections to the expanding markets of the convention center and downtown, as well as local institutions such as the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Loring Park, and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design could also be strengthened. Providing more housing options, both in terms of style and price, is another means of attracting people back to the avenue. Multiple opportunities exist for increasing housing density by incorporating commercial/residential mixed use concepts into the overall land use pattern.



*The placement of Kmart on Nicollet at Lake in the late 1970s created a barrier between southwest Minneapolis and downtown*



*The Franklin Avenue intersection is an appropriate investment area*

## 5 Recommendations

### **Investment/Redevelopment**

- 5.1 Invest in commercial development from Grant to Lake with nodes at Franklin, 26th, and Lake
- 5.2 Redevelop the area between 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 19<sup>th</sup> Street as an area of mixed commercial and residential development

### **Urban Design/Pedestrian-Friendly Environments**

- 5.3 Apply a Pedestrian Overlay District at appropriate locations along Nicollet between 14<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> Streets
- 5.4 Expand the Special Service District currently existing between Grant and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets to encompass the portion of Nicollet from 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> Street
- 5.5 Work with members of the existing special service district (along Nicollet Avenue from Grant to 29<sup>th</sup>) to assist their efforts in maintaining the avenue
- 5.6 Encourage reuse and development of multi-story mixed use buildings
- 5.7 More clearly identify cross walks for pedestrian crossings
- 5.8 Support police in vigorously enforcing low-level livability crimes (such as panhandling, public consumption of alcohol) with the CODEFOR program, for example
- 5.9 Address issues resulting from the placement and operation of alternative schools
  - 5.9.1 Initiate discussions with School Board officials
  - 5.9.2 Pursue management standards through licensing requirements
  - 5.9.3 Pursue changes in the City's Liquor and Beer Ordinance to allow liquor, wine or beer licenses to be granted to establishments along Nicollet Avenue that are closer than the currently required 300 foot distance from a school
  - 5.9.4 Pursue the option of reserving parking for business use through City Public Works Department to deal with the problem created when school buses take up parking spaces on the street
  - 5.9.5 Consider establishing a review process or spacing limits for schools and social service uses
- 5.10 Incorporate a public gathering and green space in the redevelopment project between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets



*This parking lot at 15<sup>th</sup> Street may be a good place to redevelop or to create a green linkage from the Convention Center to Nicollet*

- 5.11 Consider pursuing an exit from the west side of the Convention Center to connect the Convention Center to Nicollet Avenue.
- 5.12 Convert the metered parking lot at Nicollet and 15<sup>th</sup> Street to a green pathway from the Convention Center to Nicollet Avenue (and potential future link to Loring Park) or redevelop the site as a mixed commercial/residential development
- 5.13 Develop a gateway to Nicollet Avenue from Nicollet Mall
- 5.14 Use signage to preserve and strengthen connections to existing and proposed green space (such as the Midtown Greenway/29<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor, Stevens Square Park and Fair Oaks Park)
- 5.15 Work with the existing Minneapolis College of Art and Design public art program to create public art on human-scale elements such as sidewalks, bridges, fences, and parking lot edges
- 5.16 Support the efforts of area business associations (including the Nicollet Avenue Business Association and the Whittier Business Association) to revitalize this section of Nicollet Avenue
- 5.17 Conduct an educational presentation on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) for neighborhood businesses

## Other

- 5.18 Create left turn lanes at Franklin, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup>
- 5.19 Explore the feasibility of traffic calming on Blaisdell and First Avenues. Strategies could include converting Blaisdell and First Avenues to two-way streets, striping a bike lane, or striping a parking lane
- 5.20 Monitor the progress of the Phillips Partnership in discussing alternative access points to 35W in the vicinity of Lake Street
- 5.21 Support 35W access alternatives which have minimal direct impact 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Preferable options include southbound exits at Lake or Nicollet (assuming reoriented Kmart). Any access scenario at 38<sup>th</sup> Street, if necessary, should maintain and improve parking (primarily west of 35W along 38<sup>th</sup>), traffic calming, and landscaping
- 5.22 Encourage people to use Nicollet Avenue by providing directional signage to Nicollet
- 5.23 Construct shared parking structures in existing parking lots to support parking demand
- 5.24 Build a good bike and pedestrian connection to the future Midtown Greenway (29<sup>th</sup> Street rail corridor)
- 5.25 Create bike lanes on First Avenue and LaSalle/Blaisdell Avenues



# Grant St. - 29<sup>th</sup> St.

Legend



Investment Area



Redevelopment Area



Streets with Freeway Access



*Plymouth Church*

*MacDonald's*

*Butler Drug*

*GFI Meat Processing Company*

Grant St.

15th St.

Franklin Av.

22nd St.

24th St.

26th St.

28th St.

*Johnson Meats*

*Acadia Café*

*Black Forest*

# 29<sup>TH</sup> STREET TO 33<sup>RD</sup> STREET

*See map page 42*

## Background

### Challenges

The Nicollet-Lake intersection typifies the incongruity that can result when a suburban development pattern is forced onto an urban setting. The scale and form of the commercial and institutional buildings that characterize this section cater to automobile traffic but are inconsistent with the high level of pedestrian traffic and transit service that exists here. Large parking lots, which facilitate auto access, can make for a poor pedestrian environment. These parking lots poorly define the street edge, and, in essence, “erode” the north and southeast corners of the intersection. Several vacant or underutilized commercial structures further detract from the pedestrian environment in this section of the avenue.

To better understand the challenges faced at this intersection, contrast the situation at Nicollet and Lake with conditions at the Hennepin-Lake intersection or Lyndale-Lake intersection. In these locations, high density and high amenity development exists in unique two- to four-story buildings that clearly define the street and sidewalk edge. These intersections are heavily populated with both pedestrian and vehicle traffic and parking demand is accommodated (to some degree) in a parking structure. The Nicollet-Lake intersection could be greatly strengthened by improved building orientation, reduced parking, and an enhanced pedestrian environment.

### Opportunities

While the area faces some redevelopment challenges and a bleak pedestrian environment, there are signs of the potential for change in the area. A tenant (Kickboxing Studio) will soon occupy the vacant building on the northeast corner of Nicollet and 32<sup>nd</sup>. The newly constructed 5<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct and MTC bus garage are attractive and could serve as catalysts for higher quality, pedestrian-friendly development in the area. Slowly but surely, the tree canopy west of the bus garage is being established. Investments which complement these existing amenities, such as restoring the urban tree canopy, providing pedestrian-level lighting, boulevard enhancement and sidewalk repair and replacement could make this section of the avenue more pleasant. These investments should be made regardless of whether or not reorienting Kmart and reopening Nicollet at Lake Street proves feasible.



*Looking north on Nicollet towards the Nicollet/Lake intersection*



*This building at the corner of 32<sup>nd</sup> Street has been vacant for an extended period of time*



*The back side of Kmart creates a threatening environment on the south end of “Eat Street”*

## The Nicollet/Lake Challenge

When Kmart was built on Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street in the late-1970s, it was part of an economic development strategy for the intersection and the surrounding area. The Kmart store has been successful and provides a needed discount retail service to the surrounding population. Ironically, however, this economic development strategy turned its back on Nicollet Avenue, effectively placing a tourniquet on the flow of consumer traffic to the Nicollet-Lake intersection and along Nicollet generally.

While committed business owners have helped bring about a renaissance on the avenue north of Lake Street, the termination of Nicollet at Lake is still a major obstacle to commercial vitality. Reorienting Kmart and reopening Nicollet Avenue would be a tremendous boon to the area. It would not only revitalize Nicollet Avenue, but would also contribute to the success of redevelopment efforts along Lake Street and along the 29<sup>th</sup> Street Greenway. **For these reasons, Task Force members believe that reopening Nicollet at Lake is the single most important element in revitalizing Nicollet Avenue.**

## 6 Recommendations

### **Investment/Redevelopment**

- 6.1 Reopen Nicollet and invest in well-designed commercial development that improves the pedestrian environment at Lake Street
- 6.2 Retain Kmart on the site by reorienting the structure
- 6.3 Encourage the redevelopment of nodes at 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> as a mixed commercial/high density residential use
- 6.4 Expand the existing Nicollet Business Association (Grand Avenue to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between 29<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets) to encourage dialogue with other businesses along Nicollet Avenue

### **Urban Design/Pedestrian-Friendly Environments**

- 6.5 Incorporate urban design and pedestrian friendly elements in the reorientation of Kmart, including reduced parking, limited building setback, landscaping and other amenities
- 6.6 Improve landscaping and painting/screening of electrical cabinets and the bus fueling station at the Metro Transit bus garage
- 6.7 Design an integrated bus shelter and building canopy extension that extends out to the street at the 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Police Station
- 6.8 Improve the urban tree canopy between 29<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Streets
- 6.9 Provide information on grants and loans for painting and fixing up properties

# 29<sup>th</sup> St. - 33<sup>rd</sup> St.

Legend



Investment Area



Redevelopment Area



Streets with Freeway Access



*Kmart*

Cecil Newman Lane

Lake street

*MTC  
Bus Garage*

*5th Precinct  
Police Station*

32nd St.

33rd St.

*Burger King*



## 33<sup>RD</sup> STREET TO 40<sup>TH</sup> STREET

See map page 46

### Background

#### Challenges

Of all of the sections along Nicollet Avenue, the section between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> is the area with the least-defined identity. With a few key exceptions, there are no strong distinguishing features in the area: no topographical features, no historic sites, no landmarks, no substantial institutional anchors, and no noticeable public realm. In addition, there are no clear land use patterns: rather than mixed-use, there is a generic *mix of uses* – some single family residential, a bit of multi-family residential, scattered commercial, and a few institutional uses. To compound the problem, the majority of the commercial and residential structures along this stretch of the avenue were built prior to 1920. As a result, many of these buildings are in need of renovation and repair which is sensitive to the preservation of the decorative detail and character that they possess.

#### Opportunities

Despite the difficulties, there are real opportunities to create urban amenities in this section. For example, there are exciting things happening at Nicollet and 38<sup>th</sup> Street. Several years ago the Nicollet Lanes bowling alley was converted to a very nicely managed Ace Hardware which serves as a neighborhood gathering spot. The Theissen building, while housing a rather nondescript business, could be a lovely commercial building with some façade improvements such as reopening the bricked-over windows. Finally, and perhaps most noticeably are the number of Latino-serving businesses which are congregating at this intersection.

While housing quality along this stretch of the avenue is generally moderate to poor, there is an opportunity to create a high quality residential development on the vacant lots between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets. Such a development could incorporate a garden or plaza which could capture some of the open and green quality of the existing lots and create a strong urban statement. Buildings in general would benefit from enhanced maintenance and renovation. Grants for painting and fixing up properties could be put to good use in this section.

Assuming that I35W access points remain at 35<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Streets (see Strategy #4) these streets may have the capacity to capitalize on I35W freeway access and maintain high quality urban form. The recently renovated building on the northwest corner of 36<sup>th</sup> Street is an excellent example. This



*This Ace Hardware at 38<sup>th</sup> Street serves as a neighborhood gathering place*



*Marissa's Bakery is one of several Latino-serving businesses at the 38<sup>th</sup> Street node*



*The northwest corner of 36<sup>th</sup> Street in the fall of 1999...*



*and after being renovated in the spring of 1999*



*The vacant lots between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets could be a good location for a residential development*

building will soon house the Lyndale Neighborhood Association Business Incubator. A particular challenge faced at the 36<sup>th</sup> Street intersection is the extensive “no man’s land” created by excessive surface parking located in front of buildings with no definition provided by landscaping, trees or fencing. In general, trees and green boulevards are virtually non-existent along this stretch of Nicollet. Public realm improvements (such as increased tree cover, pedestrian-level lighting, sidewalk repair and replacement, and boulevard enhancement) could accomplish a lot in this area. Martin Luther King Park, which begins at 40<sup>th</sup> Street, provides a tremendous green amenity. Similarly, the Werness Funeral Home and the Mormon Church, while not public spaces, help green the avenue to a significant extent. By consolidating uses and capitalizing on every asset that exists, a sense of place can be created along this section of Nicollet.

## 7 Recommendations

### **Investment/Redevelopment**

- 7.1 Encourage the redevelopment of vacant lots between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets as multi-family residential which matches the character of the adjacent three- to four-story, brownstone apartment buildings
- 7.2 Encourage the redevelopment of the node at 34<sup>th</sup> Street as mixed commercial and residential, including live-work housing types and preserving the older commercial buildings, building setbacks, and historic character.
- 7.3 Support and invest in commercial development of the area between nodes at 35<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Streets in order to capitalize on 35W access (assuming that freeway access remains in this location)
- 7.4 Monitor the progress of the Phillips Partnership in discussing alternative access points to 35W in the vicinity of Lake Street

- 7.5 Support 35W access alternatives which have minimal direct impact on 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Preferable options include south-bound exits at Lake or Nicollet (assuming reoriented Kmart). Any access scenario at 38<sup>th</sup> Street, if necessary, should maintain and improve parking (primarily west of 35W along 38<sup>th</sup>), traffic calming, and landscaping
- 7.6 Encourage the redevelopment of the underutilized commercial uses at the 37<sup>th</sup> Street node. Encourage improved site and building design in the short-term. In the long-term, redevelop the site as low- to mid-density residential (to match the character of surrounding residences) Capitalize on the existing quality residential neighborhood
- 7.7 Support and invest in commercial development at 38<sup>th</sup> Street to encourage emerging ethnic businesses in the area. Promote façade and signage improvements at the intersection
- 7.8 Encourage the long-term redevelopment of the auto-oriented businesses at the 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Street nodes as residential to capitalize on the neighboring park and quality residential environment.
- 7.9 Create a business association encompassing nodes at 35<sup>th</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, and 38<sup>th</sup> to promote unification, to improve representation, and to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas

### **Urban Design/Pedestrian-Friendly Environments**

- 7.10 Preserve appropriate architectural design elements of the two-story, brick commercial buildings at 35<sup>th</sup> Street (J's Furniture)
- 7.11 Encourage façade and signage improvements at the 38<sup>th</sup> Street node.
- 7.12 Improve the urban tree canopy in the segment from 33<sup>rd</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> Streets, and on the 3500 block in particular.
- 7.13 Improve landscape maintenance around the Martin Luther King Park building.



*Underutilized commercial uses at 37<sup>th</sup> Street...*



*and 40<sup>th</sup> Street should be redesigned or redeveloped*



*J's Furniture at 35<sup>th</sup> Street has some quality architectural elements*

# 33<sup>rd</sup> St. - 40<sup>th</sup> St.

Legend



Investment Area



Redevelopment Area



Streets with Freeway Access



*Burger King*

*Church of New Life*

*Werness Brothers  
Funeral Home*

33rd St.

35th St.

36th St.

38th St.

*Super America*

*Ace Hardware*

*Church of Latter Day Saints*



# 40<sup>TH</sup> STREET TO 47<sup>TH</sup> STREET

See map page 49

## Background

Commercial and residential uses are generally better defined in this section than in the section from 33<sup>rd</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup>. The same mix of residential and commercial uses exists, but the commercial nodes are better delineated and the residential areas appear to be more stable.

One area with a particularly strong neighborhood-serving commercial flavor is the intersection of Nicollet and 43<sup>rd</sup>. Unique businesses, such as Anodyne Café, Lufrano's Restaurant, Road Runner Records and the Odds-n-Ends shop, operate around this intersection. This area has great potential to attract pedestrians because of its friendly pedestrian environment. The human scale of the buildings, limited setbacks, and large shop windows are inviting and create a sense of safety. Improvements to this area (such as pedestrian level lighting, awnings, improved tree canopy and other greenery) would serve to make the area even more identifiable. 46<sup>th</sup> Street is the other strong commercial node in this section. The Bruegger's Bagel shop is a great reuse of the old fire station that formerly existed at this location. This node would also benefit from streetscape improvements.

The stability of the residential areas mentioned above may be due, in large part, to the presence of Martin Luther King Park which covers four full city blocks between Nicollet and Stevens and 40<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup>. The park is the largest expanse of green along the entire Nicollet corridor. The amenity value of the park combined with increasingly interesting topography in the area creates a more pastoral residential environment. The edge of the park along Nicollet may be a good place for a "series" public art installment that would create visual interest for pedestrians and drivers. Buildings in this section are generally in good repair; however, most were constructed prior to 1930 and will need repair and maintenance.

### 8 Recommendations Investment/Redevelopment

- 8.1 Support and invest in the commercial node between 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and mid-block south of and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street
- 8.2 Encourage a mix of commercial and residential uses between 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup>
- 8.3 Establish a pedestrian overlay district between 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets (mid-block)



*Shops between 42<sup>nd</sup> Street...*



*and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street are unique, pedestrian-friendly destinations*





*Bruegger's Bagels is a great re-use of this old fire station*



*Posting entrance and exit signs and prohibiting left turns out of the parking lot at the 46<sup>th</sup> Street shopping center could prevent some accidents*

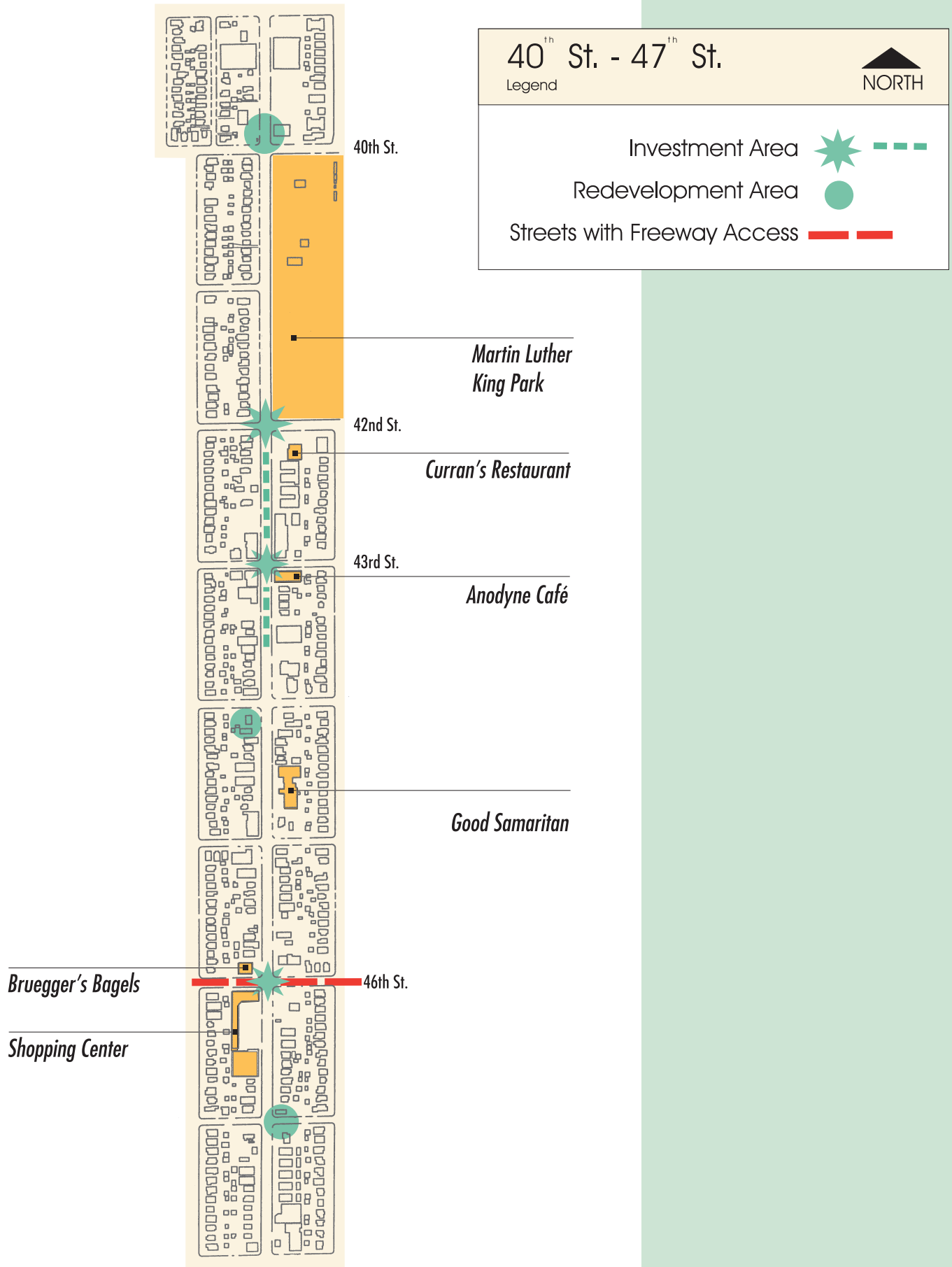
- 8.4 Encourage redevelopment of the underutilized commercial site (currently a garage/workshop) on the west side of the 4400 block as low-intensity commercial or residential.
- 8.5 Encourage a light commercial/retail use to locate in the former Kentucky Fried Chicken on the east side of Nicollet in the 4500 block
- 8.6 Support and invest in commercial development at 46<sup>th</sup> Street in order to capitalize on 35W access
- 8.7 Create a business association encompassing nodes at 43<sup>rd</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> Streets to promote unification, improve representation, and to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas

### **Urban Design/Pedestrian-Friendly Environments**

- 8.8 Encourage storefront enhancements on the west side of the 4200 block such as providing more transparent windows and enhancing the historic quality of the block.
- 8.9 Encourage landscape maintenance around Martin Luther King Park Building.
- 8.10 Rebuild retaining walls on the southwest end of the 4100 block

### **Other**

- 8.11 Limit entrance and exit options to patrons of the shopping center on the southwest corner of 46<sup>th</sup> Street intersection in order to improve vehicle and pedestrian safety. Pursue posting 'entrance only' and 'exit only' signs on the north and south access points of the parking lot respectively. Post a 'right turn only' sign at the parking lot exit.



## 47<sup>TH</sup> STREET TO 56<sup>TH</sup> STREET

*See map page 53*

### Background

This section of the avenue is packed with amenities: Minnehaha Creek meanders along the base of the gently rolling hills that comprise the Tangletown neighborhood. The top of the hill between 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Streets affords a wonderful view of downtown Minneapolis. Historic structures, such as the Harington Beard House and the Harry W. Jones House, are sprinkled throughout the area. The Lustron metal dwellings in the 5000 block of Nicollet which were constructed in the late 1940s have a unique appeal. In addition a number of institutional buildings, such as the Alexander Ramsey School and St. John's Lutheran Church, contribute to the sense of place. All of these amenities contribute to the high quality, well-maintained and stable residential quality of the area.

Problems along this section of the avenue, where they exist, could largely be addressed by enhancing the pedestrian environment to a greater degree. Widened and improved boulevards with trees and other green elements, pedestrian level lighting in some select areas, and fencing or landscaping along parking lot edges could make the avenue a more comfortable and safer place to be. Traffic speeds along the avenue also detract from the pedestrian environment. This problem is due in large part to the excessive road width, particularly over the Minnehaha Creek bridge. The bridge, which spans the creek at the base of a hill has a "landing strip" quality which appears to encourage speeds in excess of the 30 MPH speed limit. On the bridge, a planted median strip or, at the very least, hanging flower baskets would slow traffic and greatly improve the bridge's appearance.

The commercial node at Diamond Lake Road (DLR) has tremendous potential to capitalize on pedestrian, bike, and auto traffic if an improved connection is made between the creek and the node. The node already receives a fair amount of traffic from 35W. The four corners of this intersection have some inherent pedestrian-friendly elements including human-scale buildings, limited setbacks and storefront windows. Street-side parking lots detract from this intersection. The entire area could be assisted by streetscape improvements such as lighting, landscaping and storefront improvements.



*A view of the Minnehaha Creek trail  
from the Nicollet Avenue bridge*



*The Harry Wild Jones house  
(constructed in 1887)*

## 9 Recommendations

### Investment/Redevelopment

- 9.1 Encourage site and design improvements of the neighborhood-serving businesses at the 47<sup>th</sup> Street node (Richfield Auto, Last Tangle). If improved site and building design cannot be achieved, redevelopment as low- to medium-density residential should be considered
- 9.2 Support and invest in commercial or office development at the 48<sup>th</sup> Street node
- 9.3 Preserve architectural or urban design elements of the two-story, brick commercial buildings at the 48<sup>th</sup> Street node.
- 9.4 Improve pedestrian and bicycle access from Minnehaha Parkway to Nicollet Avenue and the Diamond Lake Road intersection
- 9.5 Convert the former gas station on northeast corner of 54<sup>th</sup> Street to a commercial/light retail use (potential sandwich/snack shop) to capture business from Minnehaha Parkway
- 9.6 Encourage commercial development between 54<sup>th</sup> and DLR which incorporates urban design and pedestrian-friendly elements
- 9.7 Support and invest in commercial development at Diamond Lake Road in order to capitalize on north and south bound access to 35W and improved access to Minnehaha Parkway
- 9.8 Encourage home based businesses (particularly prominent in this section) that are compatible with residential uses
- 9.9 Create a business association in this area to promote unification, to improve representation, and to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas



*This former gas station at 54<sup>th</sup> Street may be a good spot for a snack/sandwich shop to serve people along Minnehaha Parkway*



*The design of the Nicollet Avenue bridge over Minnehaha Creek could be dramatically improved*

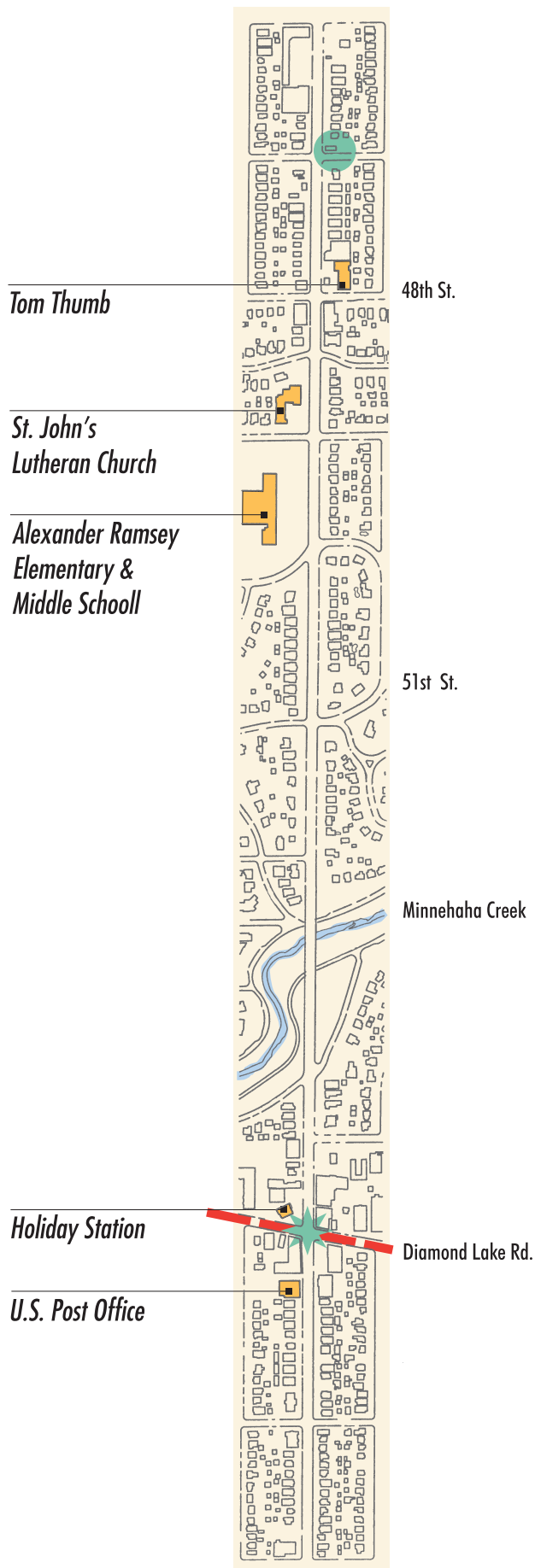
## **Urban Design/Pedestrian-Friendly Environments**

- 9.10 Provide an educational program for businesses on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- 9.11 When redeveloped, encourage Diamond Lake Automotive (on the southeast corner of the 54<sup>th</sup> Street intersection) to relocate with a limited front setback
- 9.12 Improve pedestrian access to and views of Minnehaha Creek
- 9.13 Use signage to promote improved access to and from Minnehaha Creek and Nicollet Avenue
- 9.14 Encourage the long-term redesign of the bridge over Minnehaha Creek by providing overlooks to the creek and trail, pedestrian-level lighting, and landscaping
- 9.15 To improve the aesthetics of the bridge in the near-term, encourage installation of landscaping in planters or baskets in a median strip or along the edge

## **Other**

- 9.16 Add bus shelters in locations where only bus stops and benches currently exist to promote transit use
- 9.17 Create a school bus pull-out lane at Ramsey School to increase safety of school children





## 56<sup>TH</sup> STREET TO 62<sup>ND</sup> STREET

*See map page 57*

### Background

#### Challenges

In terms of building character, this section of Nicollet Avenue is undoubtedly the most diverse. The architecture of every decade from 1900 to 1990 is represented here from Jim's men's hairstyling shop on the southwest corner of 60<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet (constructed prior to 1910) to Cub Foods, diagonally across the street (constructed after 1990). Not only is building character incompatible, uses vary dramatically from lot to lot as well. A prime example is the northwest corner of 60<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet where Richfield Lutheran Church is located directly adjacent to LeJeune Steel. City land use policy has shown limited expectations for the area. The Plan for the 1980s identified it as an appropriate area for a neighborhood shopping facility and light industry that would be small scale, employ a small labor force, and have limited or no outdoor storage. The 1999 Minneapolis Plan designates this intersection as a neighborhood commercial node.

Perhaps as a result of this diversity in building types and uses and lack of clear direction, there seems to be an inability to commit to, and therefore invest in, any particular identity. While the primarily residential neighborhood north of 58<sup>th</sup> Street appears to be reasonably well-maintained, the area south of 58<sup>th</sup> Street, where the diversity in building type and use becomes most noticeable, is suffering. The housing stock generally appears to be deteriorating, property maintenance is haphazard, and the litter problem is severe.

Despite the abundance of high-density residences nearby (the City Limits Apartments, for example) and the likely generation of foot traffic, there has been little attempt to create an environment that makes pedestrians feel comfortable and safe. In this area south of 58<sup>th</sup> Street the public space is very poorly defined: there are no conveniently accessible green spaces, no street trees, no boulevards, virtually no amenities of any kind. Exacerbating this problem is the sea of asphalt that exists in and around the Cub Foods site. Fencing and landscaping could help soften this bleak pedestrian environment in the short term, but in the long term parking needs should be re-evaluated and infill development should be pursued.



*Jim's Hairstyling shop (constructed prior to 1910) is an example of early architecture in this area*



*LeJeune Steel is located adjacent to a primarily residential area and a church*



*Parking needs should be reevaluated around Cub Foods*

## Opportunities

While the challenges mentioned above may seem overwhelming, there are opportunities to create an identity in this area. Assuming both market feasibility and a clear and strong statement of intent for the area, this section of Nicollet could market itself as a “community service center”. By incorporating pedestrian-friendly elements and building upon unique local elements (the historic 1910 commercial building, a “gateway to the city” concept, etc), this area could serve the needs of commuters on 35W and Highway 62 by providing services such as a dry cleaner, a copy shop, a hair salon, and child care services. This “community service center” could be created around the amenity of the storm water holding pond which will be constructed at 60<sup>th</sup> Street and First Avenue South in early 2000. Industrial uses that are well-contained and nicely designed can be consistent with this view of the future. If these improvements are not possible, the industry should be relocated.

### 10 Recommendations

#### **Investment/Redevelopment**

- 10.1 Encourage improved site and building design of auto-oriented uses (Goodyear, Engfer Automotive, 58<sup>th</sup> Street Service Station) at the 58<sup>th</sup> Street node. If improved site and building design cannot be achieved, the area should be redeveloped as commercial and residential mixed use, similar to that which currently exists on the northwest corner (Diamond Lake Animal Hospital)
- 10.2 Conduct a market analysis of the 60<sup>th</sup> Street intersection to determine market capacity of the area
- 10.3 Clarify city policy with regard to the 60<sup>th</sup> Street intersection to allow for potential development of a “community service center”
- 10.4 Support and invest in commercial development of the 60<sup>th</sup> Street node (Cub Foods, Richfield Lutheran Church) as a “community service center.” This center should accommodate cars and drivers but not at the expense of pedestrians. Infill development with parking interior to the site, decorative fencing, landscaping, and provision of pedestrian amenities will make this area more inviting
- 10.5 Encourage commercial/high density residential mixed use near 60<sup>th</sup> Street
- 10.6 Encourage the long-term relocation of Le Jeune Steel



*The current “gateway” to Minneapolis from Richfield could be improved greatly*



*The area around 60<sup>th</sup> Street could be successful as a “community service center”*



*The design of auto-oriented businesses at 58<sup>th</sup> Street should be improved*

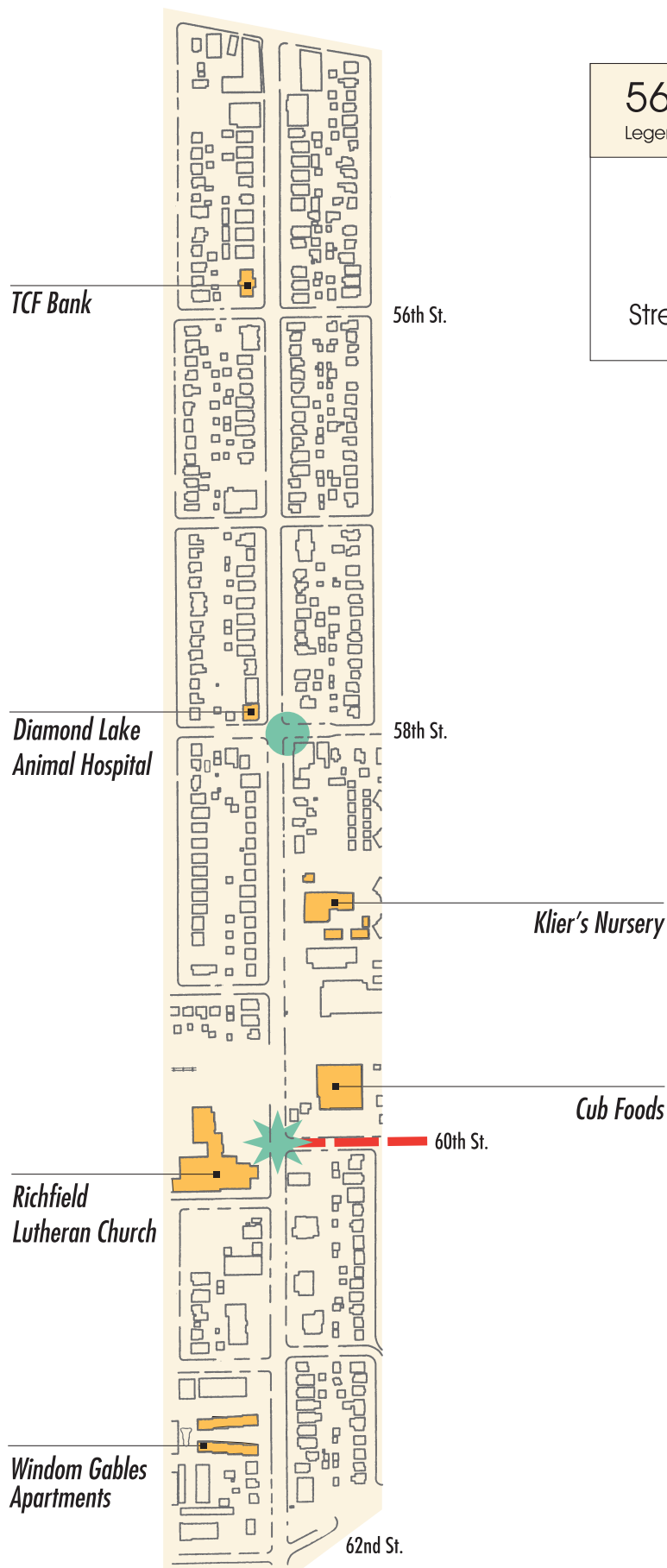
- 10.7 Explore opportunities to make area more vibrant commercially
- 10.8 Establish a new business association in the area (or reestablish the former Southwest Business Association) to encompass nodes at 58<sup>th</sup> Street, Diamond Lake Road and 60<sup>th</sup> Street to promote unification, to improve representation, and to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas

#### **Urban Design/Pedestrian-Friendly Environments**

- 10.9 Encourage streetscape improvements at and around 60<sup>th</sup> Street to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- 10.10 Develop a Special Service District at the 60<sup>th</sup> street node to maintain streetscape elements and to maintain property (litter pickup, graffiti removal, removal of posted bills, etc)
- 10.11 Create a gateway to the city near 62<sup>nd</sup> Street that incorporates design elements of the envisioned “community service center” at 60<sup>th</sup> Street
- 10.12 Encourage the proposed storm water holding pond at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 60<sup>th</sup> Street to be developed as an amenity and public green space

#### **Other**

- 10.13 Study the impacts of the Crosstown freeway expansion and identify ways to enhance and beautify this project, particularly the underside of the resulting tunnel over Nicollet
- 10.14 Consider street redesign around 60<sup>th</sup> Street to address potential increased future traffic flow
- 10.15 Improve pedestrian access to the bus stop at 60<sup>th</sup> Street near Cub Foods. This could involve the installation of a special pedestrian crossing using decorative pavers, or patterned pavement.



56<sup>th</sup> St. - 62<sup>nd</sup> St.

Legend

Investment Area

Redevelopment Area

Streets with Freeway Access

NORTH

## CONCLUSION

While this report marks the end of this planning effort, it is just the first step in actually creating positive change on Nicollet Avenue. This document represents a common vision for the future of the avenue and, as such, is a starting point. The revitalization of Nicollet Avenue as a continuous corridor with a recognizable identity along which residents, workers, and visitors celebrate its many distinctly different and unique parts will require further hard work and dedication on the part of the City, neighborhoods, and businesses along Nicollet Avenue. The Task Force hopes that this report will help inspire continued commitment to Nicollet Avenue.



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